

Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Sport Clubs – A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

People with disabilities are underrepresented in organized sports and often practice sports in separate settings, e.g. specific disability sports clubs. This implies that there are various barriers to sports participation (e.g. Shields & Synnot, 2014). Therefore, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities asks that people with disabilities participate on an equal basis in sports and physical activity by changing and adapting structures. Hence, the question is which structural conditions are conducive for an equal participation of persons with disabilities in sport clubs?

For this, a multi-level model is used to explain the conditions for participation in sports clubs at three levels – the member level, the organizational level and the club's environmental context. Focussing on the organizational level, the club culture, formal structures and established practices is crucial (cf. Ainscow & Booth, 2002). When this model is applied to either sample or case studies, a differentiation of specific types of clubs should be taken into account because sports participation of people with disabilities takes place within three different settings: Disability clubs with only persons with disabilities as members (separation), regular clubs with a special group for them (integration) and regular clubs where members, both with and without disabilities, practice together (inclusion). Accordingly, the conditions of participation for these three types will be analyzed with regard to their similarities and differences to give best-practice examples design supportive measures for increasing sports participation of people with disabilities in sports clubs.

References

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